

[Transport Workers]

Duplicate

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK 11 Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow ————— Herman Spector

ADDRESS 530 Parkside Avenue 41-21 Third Avenue

DATE January 31, 1931

SUBJECT Living Folklore Among Transport Workers

1. Date and time of interview January 30, 1939 - All day.
2. Place of interview Transport Workers Union West 64th Street
3. Name and address of informant Mr. Forge - Transport Workers Union
4. Name and address of person, if any, that put you in touch with informant. [Mrs Markey?]
Transport Workers Union
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

As above

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6. Description of room, house, surrounding, etc.

The union headquarters. A four story building in a neighborhood dominated by brownstone buildings, bars, dance halls. Mr. Forge editor of "Transport Workers Bulletin," was interviewed in his office, and he gave reporters access to back issues of the Bulletin. All material included here was culled from these issues.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow _____ Herman Spector

ADDRESS 530 Parkside Avenue 41-21 Third Avenue

DATE January 31, 1939

SUBJECT Living Folklore Among Transport Workers

Forms: "TRANSPORT WORKERS BULLETIN" ALL I SAY IS . . . BY RHYMING RIVETER

(Pseudonym of Brother Hornbeck, structural steel worker on transit lines, now an official of T.W.U.

[md] AT 5 A.M. the alarm rings And brings me down from heaven. At 6 o'clock I'm on my way To be on the job at seven. at 7:30 comes a yell The men all turn to work. The sun is hot, the wind is stiff, In snow, or fog or murk, "Come on you guys, come shake a leg," From start to end we hear Until the hour reaches noon And eating time is near. We grab a bites, a gulp and snatch, Providing we can spare it. No turkey dinner, quail or steak

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Nor port, Bordeaux or claret. In half an hour back we go The foreman keeps on chasing;
"Faster, faster, fast and fast!" The men are running, racing. Quitting time will come around
[?] In time, or fifteen after — The foreman says his watch has stopped Oh yes, it does -
the grafter. We have not even got a pail To wash off grease and dirt Because the bosses
seem to fool That showers and soap may hurt. We wear our work clothes on the train
Although we might not like it, Than leave it on the station rail And have somebody take it,
We scatter each in his own way The end of day we call it And so for home, and so to bed;
That is — if we can make it.

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From: TWBulletin SHE WILL HAVE NO SLACKER BY RHYMING RIVETER 'Twas on the
night of the Ball that I met her, Her eyes were like stars in the sky. She was lonesome, I
tried to befriend her But she said it was useless to try. I insisted on knowing the reason
But she held out and would not tell Until we parted, then she accused me of treason For
I was not a union man. Since then I've done plenty of thinking As to who and to what it's
about And now I've cut out my shrinking And joined in with the rest of the crowd. Some
fine day in June I'll get married To the girl of my dreams from the Ball. When we do, all you
men are invited To the feast at the Union Ball. For she says she will have no slacker At the
party whenever it'll be. So if you all want to come to our wedding You must show up some
evening to me. Yes, we intend to have a few babies - Maybe three, perhaps four if we can
And you may tell the bosses and beakies They'll grow up to be UNION MEN.

From: TWBulletin SIMPLE QUERIES

(Anonymous) I am a Conductor young and fine And work all night on a transit line Many
questions do I get Which I answer, you can bet But now I wish to ask one myself So
please don't put it on the shelf: My wages per hour are fifty-three cents, Which is not
enough to meet the ends. Yet the B.M.T. made a million dollars more Than it ever did
before; Now what I really want to know Is, where does all the money go?

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Last Saturday night I had a dream. I dreamt I was dead. When I landed at the gates of heaven a man outside the gates asked where I came from. I told him. He then asked me where I worked. When I explained that I was a tower-man on the BMT he directed me to the arena across the way.

I walked across and he instructed me and entered the arena. It was about as big as Madison Square Garden. The place was filled with transit workers of New York and it was explained that St. Peter was coming to find out what good deeds each one of us had done on earth.

There was a stage at the front of the arena and I made my way to a seat close to it. I recognized many faces. Right next to me, upon my word, who do you think were sitting, but Al Beers and Charley Landon. Beers never looked better alive. He wore a new suit, his trousers creased, shined shoes and a clean shirt on. And Landon was really without his perpetual smile. Beers would not forget his old habits and kept bumming the price of a cup of coffee and a cigaret from other fellows.

Tom O'Shea, McMahon and Quill were seated on the stage. In the back of the stage, McCarthy and Hogan were sitting near the gate leading to heaven. O'Shea then rose and announced the arrival of St. Peter. A silence I never experienced set in. After a short introduction St. Peter addressed the assembly. He closed his remarks by announcing that all the members of the TWU please stand up and walk through the gate. Everyone in the room rose. St. Peter then said that admission would be by membership book. About 10 percent fainted and slumped in their seats. St. Peter continued the address.

"You members of the TWU have performed noble work in New York. Your fight was a hard one. Enemies you had many. You 4 had to fight the transit trust, the Company Beakies, the bankers, the anti-labor papers and a host of others. You have done a good job. Form the line and walk through the gate at my right. Have your books ready."

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As I came near the gate I asked permission to remain in the arena for a while. This request was granted. I took a walk around the arena. Way back in a corner I noticed a small group of men. In the center of the group there was a man who seemed to be in terrible agony. When I asked what was the matter, this man appealed to me to help him by using my influence as a TWU member. "My name is Patrick Joseph Connolly," he said. "See what you can do to get me through these gates." "Oh, so you are the [Scab?] of [?] from the IRT?" I exclaimed in surprise. "And your mother named you after Ireland's Patron Saint. What a disgrace to St. Patrick and the Irish people you are. And who are these mugs surrounding you, may I ask?"

"These are my delegates, my thugs and stool-pigeons who served me on earth," was his answer.

As I was walking away I felt somewhat sorry for Pat. "Well you would not have to worry about snow storms where you are headed for, anyhow, Pat. So long."

When I reached the stage again I met another surprise. There was Pete Coons pleading with St. Peter. As I got closer I heard St. Peter ask him what action had he taken when the BMT made the towers automatic and did away with the Towermen "Well," he pleaded "I have only 250 in our union and what could I do about it?"

"What could you do?" Saint Peter was losing his patience. "Why did you not make common cause with the TWU?" His excuse was that he thought they were superior and better than the other crafts

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"And moreover, Mr. Menden and Mr. Egan would be extremely displeased if he worked together with TWU, of courses, we are all for the principles of the TWU."

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"Well," St. Peter admonished him, "If George Washington had done as you did you would still be paying the Tea Tax to the British Crown. All brave and honest men displease their oppressors and make enemies. Good deeds are what count, not good excuses."

The next to be interviewed was Mary Murray, BMT Ticket Agents Reo. In answer to the question as to what good she had done, Mary cast a longing glance toward the gate to heaven and coyly replied; "Last spring I spent four weeks in Albany trying to help the enactment of Murice Fitzgerald's Bill."

Ding, ding, ding... The alarm went off. My dream was over. if the dream continues some night I will let you know the rest. THE CROOKED EYE GLASSES DESIGNED BY A WELL-KNOWN COMPANY "UNION" HEAD

When worn by a worker these glasses make his own pay check look very big and the company's profits very small. When worn by a company official an excellent record of an active union man turns into an indictment of public enemy number 1. It has many more uses in the same direction. 6 "ABIE THE AGENT" Oh read of the tale that is here related About one of the "men" on the Elevated; This story is true - it cannot be negated, So read to the finish, and your breath will be bated. He's called "Abie the Agent" (a gent be it stated Who wears seven shirts lest he got ventilated.) Now to this Abie gent there was one day donated A TWU Bulletin in which 'twas narrated How company unions could be exterminated How stoolies and spies and scabs should be treated How cowards and cravens and their ilk should be hated. But did Able read all this? Alan, no, 'twas not fated. For the NAME of the paper made Abe agitated, His knees knocked together, his heart palpitated, "Take it away, take it away," he howled and spated. "I'll be fired. I'll be fired," he then iterated. Then Able sat down, and for a while cogitated; He figured he ought to be congratulated For avoiding the peril of being implicated With anyone, or anything, that the "Brotherhood" hated.

STOP DOZING B.M.T. SWITCHMAN Who is he who with all his might Through day and dusk, and dawn, and night Heaves coal, runs towers and handles a train, In warm and cold months is under a strain? 7 When rails are covered with ice and snow He shovels and sweeps to make them go, He seen that the switches are able to throw, That danger is lessened for the traffic's flow. He is busy at times breaking trains in the yard For rush-hour service that soon will start. In snow or hail or torrents of rain He never can stop when making up a train. Never forget the live rail in the yard. The juice, if you touch it, will stop your heart; The overhead wire works just the same When letting off brakes on a freight hauling train. These are the Switchmen on the BMT Whose rates per hour are as low an 53. You watch them work, you watch them speeding What a man had to do to make a living. Stop dozing you man with such rates of pay And those who get somewhat more for their day, To get what you need, things that are due you, The one medium that I know of is the TWU.

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PASSENGER'S ADVENTURES Uptown in a train I decided to rush, So I sped to the subway and into the crush; But after I got there, I learned with a shock The trains were not running because of a block. "What the heck is the matter?" I yelled in a rage To the agent who sat like a sap in his cage. I flew out the wheels, and I glared at the youth As he counted some pennies he had in the booth. "Return me my nickel, you silly jackass." "Sorry, sir, can't," he said, "but here is a pass - Take it and use it - tis good on the El. When this block will be over, I cannot foretell." I sniffed and I spat, and I cursed through my teeth, The I sped up the steps and into the street. I spurted and sprinted, and came to an El. And I charge up a stairs like the hammers of hell. I'd forgotten the pass when I got to the top, And I reached in my pocket for a nickel to drop, A dame was in front of me taking her time, Requesting the agent for change of a dime. I bowled her clean over and shot for the wheel, And was out on the platform before she could squeal. The door was just closing, but I ran like share, And was aboard in a flash, with nothing to spare. Perspiring and clammy, and sticky with heat, With a sigh of relief I flooped down on a seat, Then all of

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a sudden, a fearful suspicion, Reduced my whole mind to a dreadful condition. I turned to a woman, who was nursing a pup,

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And hoarsely I asked her - "Ain't this train going up?" She looked me all over, from my toes to my crown. "Why, no" she said coolly, "it' going downtown."

HAPPY NEW YEAR IN THE POWER HOUSE It was New Year's in the Power House
And the Seven-Day Slaves were there All doing their work as usual And breathing foul air.
When the foreman slowly entered And gazed about the place; "Happy New Year, all you
slaves," And the slaves all answered; "Beans" This made him very angry And he said, "By
all the gods you'll got no five percent for that, You dirty bunch of slobs." Then up spoke
one of the seven-day Slaves, And his face was hard as brass, And he said, "You take that
five per cent And stick it up your hat."

—A Seven-Day Slave

Recently a train pulled into the East 180 St. Barn with the letters TWU chalked on its
side. Chewing Gun Kid Maffey nearly broke his neck looking for a Trouble Man to blot out
the TWU sign. The mere sight of it ghrows him into a rage. He can't take it. But even his
friends in the office gave him the ha-ha.

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The Chewing Gum Kid is shooting his mouth off that he knows all the members of the
Transport Workers Union in the 180 St. Barn and that in June they are all going to lose
their jobs. Is it possible that the Kid knows that the snow has melted since last winter? And
who is going to do the laying-off, the Kid himself on his own authority? —Invisible Man of
180th St. Barn.